

DRUG TRENDS AND PATTERNS IN MEXICO

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I want to express to you the friendly greetings of the Federal Attorney-General of the Mexican Republic, who through me participates in these meetings with a firm interest in establishing a positive exchange of information and receiving the knowledge and experience of the professionals here today.

The drug dependence that characterizes the second half of our century is an unfortunate indicator of our times. We in Mexico have yet to measure totally the damage that drug dependence is doing to our society. We know with a reasonable degree of certainty the damage that some substances are causing to individuals. We know how drugs are affecting our families and we have some data about the impact of this problem on certain communities. But for us this is only a beginning. It may be some time before we can measure with the detail and accuracy that we want, the total damage that drug dependence is causing in the economic, social, and cultural lives of our people.

Meanwhile, we recognize the value of participating in this analysis of "community epidemiology." Our world is increasingly interdependent and we want to learn from the experiences of other countries and contribute to their programs to fight drug production, trafficking, and dependence. This includes working against those drugs that, although they do not represent an internal Mexican problem, do have alarming effects in other countries.

For example—Mexicans today consume inhalable solvents, marijuana, and some substances like amphetamines and tranquilizers. They consume little cocaine and no heroin. Mexico does not produce cocaine. However, solidarity with the international community leads us to conduct a continuing battle against the possible production and trafficking of both cocaine and heroin. First, to prevent the development of a local market in Mexico, and equally important, to help other countries prevent the importation of these drugs into their national territories.

We believe that the destruction of marijuana, which in 1984 reached volumes never before registered in Mexico and perhaps in any country; the seizure of multimillion dollar shipments of cocaine and heroin, actions that cost the lives of many honest Mexican police and military personnel; represent good examples of Mexico's cooperation in combatting this problem, which does not respect borders and does injure young people who may be our children, our brothers, our neighbors.

Mexico's internal consumption characteristics, identified through treatment of patients in health centers and through specific case studies at local and regional levels, give us the hope that with firm and continuing antidrug programs we will be able to reduce and prevent drug consumption and addiction among our young people.

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with this objective in mind, and independent of our programs to combat drug production and trafficking, the Mexican Government has developed preventive action programs, two of which have recently become highly significant. One, organized and launched by the Federal Attorney-General's-Office that I am privileged to represent today, is a strong effort to involve citizens in a broad drugawareness effort. We call this program ADEFAR, el Program de Atencion de la Farmacodependeica—in English, Program of Attention to Drug-Dependence.

The ADEFAR program is based on community participation, especially by parents and teachers, who, backed by the authorities, discourage drug consumption and create a negative atmosphere for illegal drug production and commercialization.

The program covers a variety of activities, including educating the family to give affection, understanding, and orientation to children and youth, and to teach them how to identify drug abuse in the family on a timely basis so that necessary medical and social attention may be supplied.

The ADEFAR program also concentrates on motivating parents, teachers, and the community to give information on drug street sales so that the authorities can investigate and take legal action against drug suppliers.

The multiplier effect of this program comes from integrating a social army—one that also helps us obtain statistical information on frequency and other characteristics of drug dependence in Mexico—giving us a much better picture so that we can update and adjust the design of our program and its activities.

To carry out the ADEFAR program we have organized some 100 committees in the principal cities of the Mexican Republic—with 16 committees in Mexico City alone. These committees give us access to and coverage of approximately 45 million Mexicans, close to 80 percent of the total national population.

These committees, presided over by principal local authorities, include representation from parent associations, neighborhood organizations, youth groups, sport associations, service clubs and other civic groups, plus various government organizations involved in the problem. Our Federal Attorney-General's Office holds the technical secretariat post in each committee.

In addition to our successful ADEFAR program, the president of Mexico, in February of this year, established a National Council Against Drug-Dependence to coordinate the highest levels of Federal Government in our efforts to back and strengthen the civic activities already mentioned.

This council is presided over by the Ministry of Health and includes representatives from all institutions in the health sector of our Government, as well as other Federal entities whose participation is necessary in order to give total attention to the problem. Our Federal Attorney-General's Office is one of these participating entities.

To do its-job,-the National Council Against Drug Dependence has organized four working groups. Working group one is health, which, after analyzing the various existing procedures to provide medical and social attention to drug dependents, seeks to improve and broaden public and private specialized services and to train medical personnel in primary attention health centers in order to expand national coverage. Working group-two is education, charged with establishing overall strategies and guidelines for preventive drug dependence measures. This group seeks to reinforce and broaden information and training programs directed to people who influence public opinion, educate our population, or prevent drug dependence. These people include parents, teachers, some police groups, doctors, students in professional schools, and other specialists.

Our third working group is research, which seeks to establish a system of "epidemlological vigilance" that lets us identify on a timely basis cases of epidemiological outbreak and the appearance of new drugs or substances. The research working group also seeks to conduct studies designed to define the extent of the problem and to evaluate the impact of preventive actions.

Finally; our fourth-working group is legislation, which has reviewed historical and present-day laws and seeks to improve the control of medical prescriptions, reinforce vigilance over the illegal sale of psychotropic medicines and inhalable substances, and exercise greater social pressure against drug dependence.

We believe that the National Council Against Drug Dependence and the ADEFAR program of attention to drug dependence represent sound, realistic steps by our Government, communities, families, and concerned citizens to defeat the drug problem and to preserve the health of our children. We in Mexico know that there is no delinquency, no matter what financial resources it may have, that can stand up to the force of our total Mexican society organized and united to protect our children, our families, our communities, our country.

For this reason we are pleased to be here and to participate in this conference organized by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. We hope this will be the first step in a permanent and continuous exchange of information, that it will result in the establishment of joint projects to deepen our knowledge of the characteristics of drug dependency both in Mexico and the U.S., and we believe that the mutual exchange of information will help build a united front against drug dependence.

WEST TRANSPORT

I thank you for the opportunity to be with all of you today.